

Golfer's Elbow or Tennis Elbow

By: Kim Lazarus, DC

Why is it that in the summer months more people have elbow pain? Tennis and golf have one thing in common and that is overuse of the forearm. The only difference between golfers elbow and tennis elbow is the location. Other predisposing factors can also cause these disorders to occur. These two syndromes are considered repetitive strain syndromes.

If a person is experiencing pain and discomfort on the inside of the elbow, this is considered golfers elbow or more medically know as medial epicondylitis. To identify the inside of the elbow, extend the arm and turn the palm facing upwards.

Golfers elbow is tendonitis of the flexor forearm muscles. This means the lower part of the arm has a muscle wad and when it gets overused, it tightens up and pulls on the tendon that attaches to the bony part of the elbow. This can cause pain along with a flared up tendon.

Tennis elbow has a similar mechanism of injury but is located on the other side of the arm's elbow. Most people think of this bony area as their "funny bone". This part of the forearm is the extensor wad. This condition is medically named lateral epicondylitis.

These syndromes are mainly named after the sport that puts the most stress on the group of muscles involved.

Symptoms can include pain in the elbow, swelling, and muscle tightness. If symptoms are already present, treatment is suggested right away. Treatment consists of, but is not limited to, pressure on the muscle wad by bracing, discontinuing the aggravating activity, physiotherapy, and therapeutic exercises.

Physiotherapy may include therapeutic ultrasound, interferential current, muscle stimulation, and contrast therapy like hot and cold treatments. Chiropractic manipulation and massage therapy are also good choices along with acupuncture, physical therapy, and rehabilitation exercises.

Since I am not a medical doctor I cannot prescribe drug therapy. Therefore, I recommend consulting with your primary care physician for conventional protocols like anti-inflammatories and muscle relaxors if necessary.

Avoiding these injuries is always the best advice in preventing both golfers and tennis elbow. Pre-sport conditioning like strength training and stretching helps. If you want to be an injury-free weekend warrior, the best injury prevention is conditioning yourself during the week.

Wouldn't it be nice to go back to work on Monday without all the aches and pains from the weekend? I think so. There were several weekends I ended up in the emergency room from a weekend full of outdoor adventures. Now that I am on a regular weight-training program, I can spend time rock climbing, horseback riding, motorcycle riding, and skiing and still feel good on Monday when I return back to work.

Realizing that being a weekend warrior was merely a form of self-destruction, I decided to change my ways to prevent such injuries from occurring in the first place. Over the years I have realized my limits and now try to stay within those bounds.

In summary, condition your muscle groups for specific sports, recognize the early signs of overuse syndromes, get treatment early on and see how injury free your summer can be.

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